



Peer Technical Assistance (TA) Short Summary

Requesting Agency:	Essex County Division of Welfare
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TA Event Tracking #:	152
TA Requested:	At the request of the Essex County Division of Welfare, this site visit was initiated to visit a call center in Hennepin County, Minnesota to determine the validity of building and utilizing a call center in Essex County, N.J.
TA Goal:	The goal of this site visit was to provide New Jersey with an overview of call center operations and an opportunity to interact with users of a system that is similar in size and scope to that sought by Essex County.
TA Format:	Site Visit
Sample Evaluations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely helpful and knowledgeable: addressed all issues questioned. As we proceed, have a great understanding of the pitfalls.

Analysis:

At the request of the Essex County Division of Welfare, this event was created to provide information and cost analysis for a proposed call center in Essex County, New Jersey. Essex County's caseload, which includes TANF, Medicaid, General Assistance and Food Stamps, has increased significantly. Case managers are overwhelmed by the volume of customers that request assistance in each office. Department officials believe a call center approach, along with the inherent automation, would greatly reduce the burden on case managers and customers. Officials also believe data accumulated through the call center would be useful in stabilizing the sanctioning process. The site visit's intent was to address systems and resources for call center implementation. Key areas to be addressed included:

- **Technology** – equipment, staff, and infrastructure requirements;
- **Functionality**- parameters for call center services; and
- **Cost**- initial funding, ongoing funding, and maintenance requirements.

This site visit included participants from the Essex County Division of Welfare, New Jersey Department of Human Services, and representatives from the Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department. Features of the site visit included an overview of Hennepin County's call center system; program manager use of the system; history of the system-both past and present; system functionality; staff assignments, and a tour of one of the call centers.

Hennepin County representatives presented historical, evolutionary, and political data that was encountered in developing and funding their system. Staff was on hand to discuss current operations, staffing, work flow, call volume and wait times, technical aspects of the Cisco system, and strategic planning for future endeavors. Distinctions were made between the functionality of the Eligibility Supports Call Center and the Business Partners Call Center functions.

Building on this base, the site visit afforded participants the opportunity to leverage planning efforts. As a result of the information provided by Hennepin County, Essex County representatives are now equipped with cost analysis data, system functionality, and "lessons learned" information in support of their quest to build a call center.

Overall, participants, and presenters agreed that the site visit was a successful event that provided expedient strategies to be applied when New Jersey is ready to begin call center implementation.

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